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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, February 12, 1940

Subject: "LITTLE THINGS COUNT IN SHIRT QUALITY." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Publication available, Farmers' Bulletin 1837-F, Cotton Shirts for Men and Boys.

--ooOoo--

Was there ever a man with a normal head who never to himself has said,

"These pins in shirts make me see red!"?

Not only the man of the house, but the woman who shops often becomes discouraged by all those pins put into shirts at the factory. Her main grievance, however, is not that she has to take the pins out without being scratched by them. Her objection is that because of the pins she can't always tell how well the shirt is made. She can judge the fabric pretty well as the shirt lies on the counter trussed in its pins; but she can't see the cut of the back, or the sleeves, or how the cuffs are put on or how the sleeve plackets are made. And those details of cut and workmanship make considerable difference in the comfort and fit of a shirt.

Sometimes the store will cooperate with the customer and allow her to take out a few surplus pins. Or sometimes they keep a sample of the same line on display without any pins.

To the inexperienced, all men's shirts may look alike, but there are little differences. Here are some of the things to look for, mentioned in a new bulletin of the U. S. Department of Agriculture on "Cotton Shirts for Men and Boys."

Business or dress shirts are made with either attached or separate collars. Attached collars are convenient and comfortable. But the whole shirt must be laundered when the collar is soiled. When it becomes frayed the shirt has to be discarded unless the woman of the house is clever enough to take the old collar



off and to attach a ready-made white broadcloth collar, which can often be bought in a department store or haberdashery.

The wise woman arms herself with certain information before shopping for her husband's or son's shirts. She not only knows the neck-band size and sleeve-length but also whether he likes pointed or tab collars. The tab collars have various arrangements to keep the points down neatly.

She must also know what height collar is preferred. A man with a short neck can't wear a high collar comfortably, and a man with a long neck may not like a low collar.

The fabric of the shirt should be guaranteed preshrunk, or the collar band of the shirt may be too small after washing. And when I say preshrunk I mean guaranteed not to shrink any more than so-and-so many percent.

Collar points should be sharp, evenly stitched, and as flat as possible. If they aren't well-tailored the shirt as a whole will not look well and will be hard to iron. On most good-quality shirts there are several rows of machine stitching, called quilting, on the neck band, to keep it firm.

So much for collars, Now let's look at sleeves.

The top of the sleeve should come to the edge of the shoulder bone. So you need another measurement when you start shopping--width across the back yoke on a shirt that you know fits right.

In the best-quality shirts, sleeves are cut in one piece and are easier to iron and neater in appearance than if pieced. However, sleeves in medium-quality shirts are often pieced at the back of the arm to save material. This does not affect the fit. The sleeves are the same size as those cut in one piece. But notice whether the thread of the material goes straight with the top fold of the sleeve. If not, it will be hard to iron the sleeve flat.

The length of the sleeve as given on the shirt is taken from the number of inches from the center of the back yoke at the neck to the edge of the cuff. Or,



taken on the person of the wearer, from the prominent bone at the back of the neck to the wrist bone, with the arm extended out at the side. The new bulletin, by the way, has a picture showing a woman exactly how to measure the men in her family for sleeve length.

Another point, see that the sleeve fullness at the cuff is neatly distributed at the back, not bunched or uneven. And the sleeve placket should open wide enough for the cuff to be ironed flat. A button and buttonhole is often placed midway of the placket to hold it together. This makes the cuff stay neat and straight about the wrist.

Work shirts often have a double section at the elbow to stand hard wear. But unfortunately they may be finished with poor sleeve plackets which are merely part of the underarm seam, hemmed instead of tailored.

As we said a moment ago, the cut of a shirt back is often overlooked because the shirt is all pinned together. All the same, the cut of the back is very important to comfort and to the wear a man gets from a shirt. Especially if he's round-shouldered or heavy in build.

A full-cut back is always needed for free reaching, swinging the arms, and driving a car. This is sometimes provided by generous width allowance eased into the yoke, and sometimes by fullness set in gathers over the shoulder blades. Fullness in the middle of the back does little or no good.

In most well-cut business shirts the edge of the shirt back that joins the yoke is rounded higher at the center back. This takes care of the length needed by the natural rounding of the shoulder muscles.

Work shirts are cut in one piece in the back, with no separate yoke as in business shirts. But they often have a shaped section applied to look like a yoke, and if this is deep enough, it serves as reinforcement.

Again I haven't touched on all the points to look for in buying men's shirts. But if you want a printed buying guide, write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Ask for "Cotton Shirts for Men and Boys". It's a free bulletin as long as the supply lasts.

